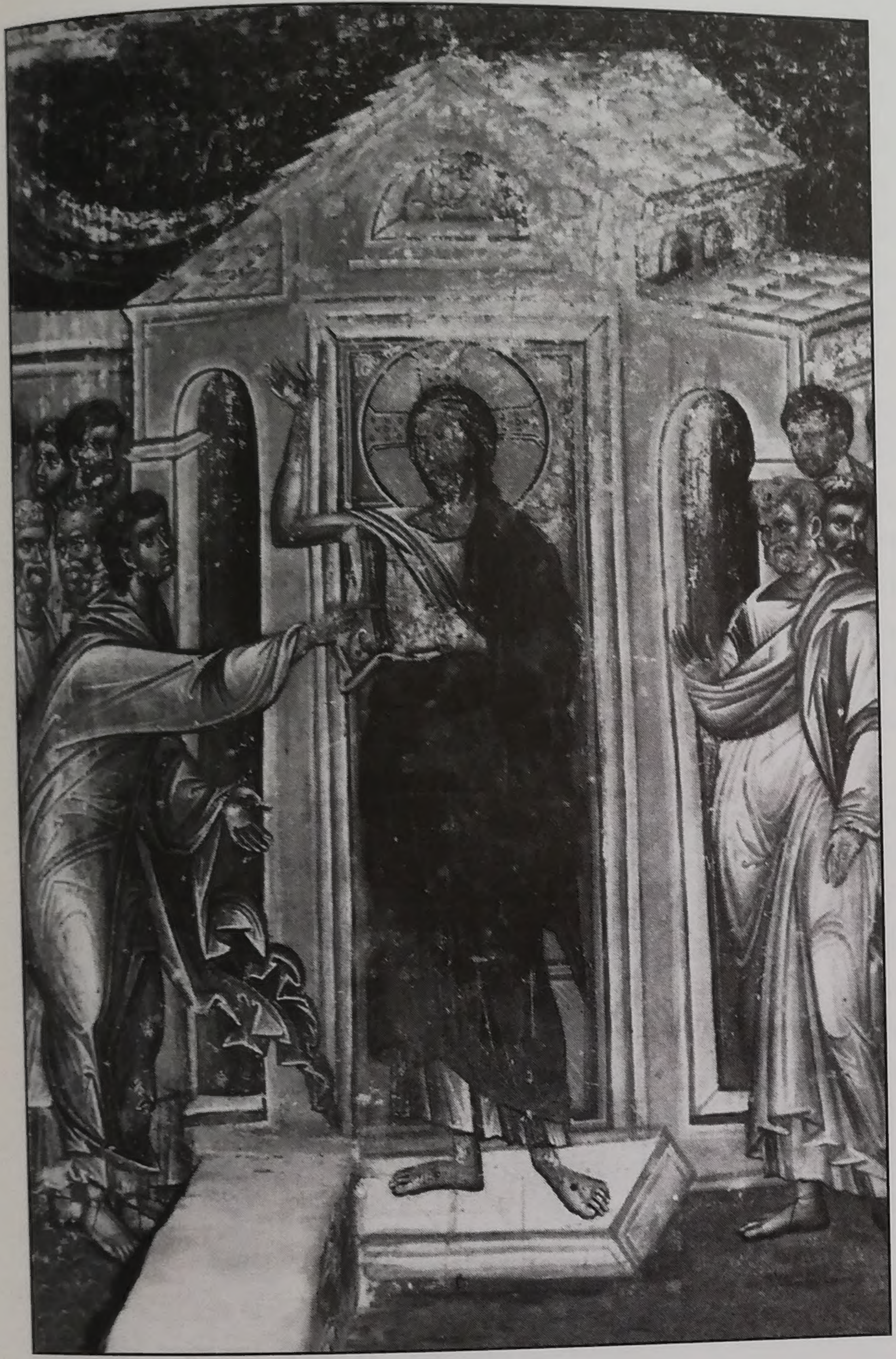
Thomas and reassured him that he is truly the Resurrected Lord and made a another appearance before the apostles demanding that they spread his teaching to all nations. There the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, as they were promised by Christ (Luke 24, 29; John 15, 26), which enabled them to perform the mission entrusted to them by Christ. The ministry of the apostles was carried on by their disciples, ordained as the first bishops, and later by the followers of these ecclesiastics so that, in the Orthodox church, the apostolic idea perseveres in an unbroken chain to this day. Therefore, all cathedral churches (in Serbia this is best observed on the examples of Žiča and Peć) were images of the first "Mother of all churches" from Zion, as they sometimes called themselves. The Zion church, however, was even more than that. In patristic exegesis the Church of Christ has its see in the New Jerusalem, a new and perfect Zion. Based on such an understanding of Zion, tradition linked this place by Jerusalem early on with the events of Christ's life which were crucial for the establishing of the New Church. The Zion church became a general model and in particular a model for cathedral churches which were its descendants and ideal copies. By decorating his cathedral at Žiča with "Zion" scenes (soon to be copied by his follower Arsenije in Peć), archbishop Sava I followed the idea of Zion in a higher sense of the word, by emulating the model of the church founded by Christ himself.[116]

As attested by the church of the Holy Apostles at Peć, Sava's concept of emulation of the first Christian cathedral, that of Zion, in his archbishopric see, through a specific choice of subjects selected for its decoration and liturgical rites based upon Jerusalem models, was remembered and honoured throughout the XIII century. It was also observed at the time of the restoration of the wall paintings at Žiča when the artists employed by king Milutin actually copied the original programme. A while later, in 1319, archbishop Nikodim did the same in the prologue to his translation of the Jerusalem Typikon, this time in words, of course, in which he explains the undertakings of the first Serbian archbishop. By relying on topoi referring to the connection between the Old and the New Temple and the imitation, or "appearance", of the famous monasteries of Jerusalem in Serbia, a genre which defined the mentality and mode of expression of medieval man, Nikodim justified the introduction of Jerusalem rites to the Serbian church. He goes on to say that St. Sava became similar to Moses, who built the Tabernacle after an image revealed to him by the Lord on Mount Sinai, because

90
Gračanica, *The apostles offering Christ the fish and the honey*, 1319–1321



91
Staro Nagoričino, *Incredulity of Thomas*, 1315–1317

he created "this great church" (probably Žiča) after the image of the Zion church and the church of St. Sabas the Sanctified. Because the Serbian church thus became similar to these sanctuaries of Jerusalem, it was only natural that it should also resemble them in its monastic rule. It is obvious, therefore, that in the eyes of Nikodim, references to the Tabernacle of Moses as a prototype of the New Temple, the model apostolic church of Zion and the church of St. Sabas the Sanctified, as well as the esteem of St. Sava the Serbian, were indispensable in finding a justification for the introduction of a new typikon to the Serbian church.[117]

Other traces of imitation of the Zion church can also be found in Serbian painting of king Milutin's era. In Nagoričino and Gračanica, in representations of Christ's Resurrection appearances traditionally linked to Zion (Appearance before the Eleven Apostles and another appearance before the apostles, Incredulity of Thomas, Christ Eating the Honey and the Fish), this church is depicted in the form of a basilica.[118] Some of its elements appear also in scenes such as the Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper, events which were also tied to Zion.

Another legend, that of the Zion investiture of St. James and his followers as bishops of Jerusalem, was also present in late Byzantine art. In the church of St. Nicholas at Melnik (XIII century) we find the investiture of St. James the Lord's brother, in the presence of Christ, while in one of Milutin's churches, Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos in Thessaloniki, several figures of the first bishops of Jerusalem, St. James, Symeon and Jude, who were invested and presided in the Zion church, appear side by side in the decoration of the altar space.[119]

Frescoes Around Entrances

Concepts of church buildings remained quite fixed throughout the Middle Ages and did not change much over the centuries, a phenomenon that is also reflected in programmes devised for the decoration of ecclesiastical spaces. By the dawn of the XIV century a stable framework had already been formed for programmes of decoration of altar spaces and church naves. It included liturgical and Christological themes, supplemented at times with new images or iconographic variations. Lateral and not always indispensable structures, such as nartheces or entrances porches, had no such standard programmes of decoration. Their programmes were open to far more liberal changes

and additions and it comes as no surprise at all that new subjects and cycles appeared first precisely on those locations, to be included later on in the programmes of other parts of church buildings. Apart from being a space intended for certain groups of the faithful, the entrance – in the words of archbishop Symeon of Thessaloniki from the beginning of the XV century – had a clearly defined function of a transition point, especially at the beginning and the end of the liturgy. The art of king Milutin's era adopted from previous times the custom of raising nartheces because they played a significant role in liturgical rites performed, it seems, according to the Euergetis typikon.[120]

The repeated representation of ktetors, members of the ruling Nemanjid dynasty and the highest ecclesiastical officials in entrance spaces of various churches conveyed, among others, a clear message of promotion of those who took charge of the house of the Lord and, through their actions or direct involvement in the raising or restoration of a church, safeguarded the true faith. The link with traditions of the first half or the middle of the XIII century was not broken, only the iconography experienced greater or minor changes. Almost as a rule, images of this sort were used to stress the harmony of two authorities in the land, that of the state and that of the church. Moreover, already at entrance to a monastery or church one could encounter the images of those who, joined in ideal love, extended a devout offering to God. It is quite possible that, when he set off to transform the monastery entrance at Djurdjevi Stupovi into a parekklesion, king Dragutin had in mind the entrance to Studenica monastery, decorated in 1208/1209 with portraits of the two brothers, Vukan and Stefan, and probably all the others who were responsible for the construction of that monastery. At Djurdjevi Stupovi, next to his own and a portrait of his family, Dragutin also commissioned the portraits of his brother and king, Milutin, and his wife, as well as those of his ancestors who intercede on his behalf before Christ. An idealised image of cooperation between the ruler and the Church, at the time of the change on the Serbian throne, was conveyed here through scenes of enthronement of Milutin, Dragutin, their father and grandfather.[121] Ancestor emulation lasted until the end of the XIII century. Practically the entire decoration of the narthex of Arilje is dedicated to the exaltation of the true faith: its vault and walls are covered with representations of the Ecumenical Councils, which established the dogmas of the true faith, along with the Council of Symeon Nemanja which portrays the founder of the Serbian dynasty as a soldier of Orthodoxy and a model for his descendants, kings Dragutin and Milutin. There, in Arilje, a short cycle dedicated to the Old Testament patriarch Abraham is also included in the decoration of the narthex and appears above the entrance. It consists of three scenes and the accompanying inscriptions which point out not so much the model of an Old Testament sacrifice as the power of Abraham's faith and his serenity in the presence of the Lord.[122] Certainly in emulation of Sopoćani, the narthex of Arilje displays a Tree of Jesse, a composite representation of Old Testament messages of salvation realised through the Virgin and the birth of Christ. In the spot reserved for the death scene of queen Ana in Sopoćani, in Arilje we find the funeral scene of bishop Merkurije painted directly above his tomb.[123]

Significant changes in the decoration of entrance spaces can be observed in Serbian art only at the beginning of the second decade of the XIV century. Although the basic concepts of these spaces and their decoration remained unchanged, we now observe the emergence of new subjects which gradually spread to other parts of the church as well. The nature of this new decoration of entrance spaces of Byzantine churches is best demonstrated in the major monuments of the era, the Virgin Peribleptos at Ohrid or the churches of Mount Athos and Constantinople. Traditional themes and new, poetically reworked subjects, convey emphatically the solemnness of entering a temple, they prepare and enable the believer to step inside, inform him and instruct him about the history of salvation. Right at the entrance of Bogorodica Ljeviška, for example, he would encounter two elegant winged female figures, one with a downward pointed torch and the other with a highly raised bright disk with an image of Christ Emmanuel on it, who were there to guide him from this world into a mystical world of light and redemption. The inscriptions accompanying them reminded him that "truth comes" and "shadow vanishes", something he knew well from the verses of a troparion sung before Christmas. The language in which images of the Old and the New Testament are rendered is ancient – they appear in the guise of night and day, darkness and light, shadow and truth which shone by virtue of the incarnation of Christ on earth.[124]

This ostensible contradiction is also present in other scenes painted on the vaults of the open exonarthex of this Prizren church, namely the images and scenes from the Old and the New Testament and stories of the beginning and the end of redemption. We say ostensible because pure contrasts were unknown

92
Prizren, Bogorodica Ljeviška, *Personification of the New Church*, 1309–1313

to the medieval way of thinking. In both poetry and the visual arts meanings often blended into one another so that one theme could easily drift into the next only to merge gradually into a singular whole. The Old and the New Testament, Shadow and Truth, are only phases in the same history of salvation and this history was told through a series of well known themes, through a careful choice of Old and New Testament texts or those read at the liturgy. An extensive Tree of Jesse was located in the north part of the exonarthex, made up of a multitude of images of future events as well as prophets who heralded those events in the words inscribed on their scrolls. Two appearances of the Lord before the righteous Jacob were painted beneath the Tree in the guise of the following scenes – Jacob wrestling with the angel and Jacob's dream of a ladder connecting the earth with the heavens. Finally, this space also received a poetic vision of the Virgin's death and her assumption to heaven by John of Damascus (first sticheron of his Second Canon of the Dormition) – otherwise very rarely found in medieval art – the aim of which was to exalt the Virgin through the miraculous events which occurred on the day of her death. The illustration of "The Prophets from Above" hymn is also dedicated to the Virgin, in those days it was rarely rendered as an independent scene. It speaks of the specially chosen men of the Old Testament who had mystic visions of the Virgin, in the guise of her archetypes, and announced her coming and the Son who was going to be incarnated through her. All those prophets, painted on the soffits of arches dividing the bays and connecting the two entrances, are joined into one scene by the image of the Virgin with the infant Christ depicted in the lunette above the entrance to the church.[125]

On the central vault there is another group of images intended to prepare men to receive the teachings of Christ. This scene is usually referred to as the Baptism of Christ although it is more than just that because it includes many additional images related to John the Prodromos and his baptising of Christ, borrowed from all four gospels. Not only did the last prophet see Christ, he was also the one who directly prepared men to meet him and hear his words. The emergence of such a composition in Bogorodica Ljeviška is not unexpected. In the same location, also in the form of a circular frieze, it appears in the Chora in Constantinople. However, in Ljeviška the choice of episodes is specific and supplemented by a great number of texts written out on John's scrolls or above the scenes. Through them, John preaches to the mass-

93
Arilje, *Frescoes around the entrance to the naos*, 1295/1296

94
Arilje, *The ktetor king Dragutin*, 1295/1296

XXI

Studenica, Kraljeva crkva, *St. Sava*, 1318–1319

XXII

Studenica, Kraljeva crkva, *Birth of the Virgin*, 1318–1319

XXIII

Studenica, Kraljeva crkva, *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, 1318–1319

XXIV
Studenica, Kraljeva crkva, *King Milutin*, 1318–1319

XXV

Studenica, Kraljeva crkva,
Communion of the Apostles, detail, 1318–1319

XXVI

Gračanica, *King Milutin*, 1319–1321

XXVII

Gračanica, *Queen Simonida*, 1319–1321

XXVIII

Studenica, Kraljeva crkva,
Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, detail, 1318–1319

XXIX

Gračanica, *Last Judgement*, detail, 1319–1321

XXX

Gračanica, *Sacrifice of Abraham*, 1319–1321

XXXI

Gračanica, *Supper in Emmaus*, 1319–1321

XXXII

Gračanica, *Prophet Elijah in the desert*, 1319–1321

XXXIII

Gračanica, *The Virgin in the apse of the south parekklesion*, 1319–1321

es about the One who is to come, he teaches the Hebrews, the publicans and the soldiers about moral living, explains the signs of the coming of Christ and his power, testifies that He is the Son of God – a fact revealed on the river Jordan when, during the baptism of Christ, the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ.[126]

The care with which the episodes of this composition were put together is reflected also in the fact that a figure of Christ standing at the threshing lot and holding a shovel is positioned right next to the Last Judgement. This is one of the parables of John the Prodromos (Matthew 3, 11–12) about the power of Christ, about Christ who will separate the grain from the chaff, gathering the grain into his granary and burning the chaff with eternal flames, and his words are written out on this fresco. The separation of the righteous from the sinners will take place on the day of the Second Coming of Christ. In Ljeviška, the Last Judgement is not preserved in its entirety, but it certainly did include the parts which had become a standard feature of this composition by the close of the XIV century. The Rolling up of the Heavens is preserved as well as the Just Scales, hosts of the righteous, the Earth and the Sea with their personifications, images of eternal suffering in hell and many figures of sinners. With its lively treatment of the numerous details, the Last Judgement from Ljeviška follows the tradition of similar representations in Byzantine art, especially those of the Palaiologan period, and at times it even exceeds them in extensivness. For example, the detailed rendering of the sufferings of sinners is quite striking. It best expresses the didactic character of the Last Judgement aimed at the faithful entering the church. Together with Annas, Caiaphas, the Hebrews who crucified Christ and sinners of Judas's sort ("č'st' Judina"), the wealthy Lazarus, sinful monks, singers and lectors, we find a sinful farmer, menchant, miller, a man who slept through the holy Sunday, a lecher monk, a woman who refused to nurse another's child and an adulteress. The damned who committed these minor or major deadly sins are shown either naked or scantily dressed while being bitten by snakes and beasts, tortured by demons or hanged with the instruments with which they committed their sins. Such cruel images were a clear warning, an admonishment expressed in a language and through examples which were close to the ordinary believer.[127]

Finally, the exonarthex of this Prizren church also contains representations of Serbian archbishops and local bishops of Prizren. Their presence confirmed the episcopal character of Bogorodica Ljeviška and attested the ancient origins of this episcopal see and as well as of the autocephalous Serbian church. Forming a line in the order in which they served in their respective offices, they conveyed an image of continuity and constancy of the Orthodox faith in Serbian lands and the bishopric of Prizren, the purity of which was entrusted to their care. At the same time they were role models of all future bishops of Prizren and teachers of all the faithful. The message of just judgement and rightful weighing (John 7, 24; Matthew 7, 2), written out on the open book held by Christ in the Virgin's arms painted above the entrance, is addressed to them all, the people and the bishops, but above all to that latter group. There was no space in the exonarthex for a portrait of the ktetor who receives the Lord's blessings for the Godly deed he has undertaken. Because of its specific messages, representations of the ktetor and his ancestors had to be singled out in a particular manner so that images of king Milutin and his forefathers appear in the inner narthex. The careful choice of characters entailed an equally careful disposition of the portraits, with St. Symeon Nemanja above the west and Christ above the east entrance. Depicted in the act of blessing with both his hands, Christ assumes the iconographic form of the Gate and establishes a direct connection with the ktetor, king Milutin.[128] Such an image of Christ, this time rendered as a boy, appears also above the central doorway while the two most prominent apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, symbols of the apostolic nature of the church, are painted on either side of it. The book in Paul's hand represents his epistles as the most complete explanation of Christ's teachings while Peter's keys (Matthew 16, 19 and 18, 18) underline the power conferred upon him and the other apostles by Christ.

The programme of fresco decoration of Bogorodica Ljeviška may have been influenced by Sava, the bishop of Prizren, but soon after its completion, in 1309, he became the archbishop of the Serbian church and focused all his attention on the completion of restoration works in Žiča. The frescoes in the narthex and the preceding porch of this church were certainly painted during his time but it is not certain whether or not they repeated the original programme of decoration devised in the days of St. Sava. The narthex of Žiča has reached us in a very altered state and its paintings are almost completely destroyed. Still, the scant remains of frescoes visible today, as well as those which were visible before World War II, indicate that the choice of scenes must have been very similar to that of Prizren. On the west wall, including parts of the vault, was the Tree of Jesse of which only

a long line of pagan wise men remain today. In Ljeviška they flank the composition in question and turn towards it whereas in Žiča they appear in its bottom zone. The dependence of Žiča on the model offered by Ljeviška is also recognised in the once partly visible composition related to St. John the Prodromos and the Baptism of Christ located on the south part of the east wall of the narthex. Although it seems that it was not all too similar to its counterpart from Prizren, the once visible traces of two figures of John indicate that an extensive Baptism cycle, of the type seen in Ljeviška, may have been present in Žiča, too.[129]

The entrance to the church at Žiča, located under the tower, is much better preserved. It has the shape of an elongated porch and its fresco decoration differs from that of the entrance zone of Ljeviška. Depending on the contents of the older layer of paintings, its programme is both typical and atypical of church portals. It is futile to search for liturgical overtones in this case because the entire decoration is composed with an aim to stress the nature of the Church, to point out the role models of true faith and single out those who, through their care for Žiča, extended their offerings to Christ in the manner of those who made offerings to the Lord in ancient times. Guided by these ideas, the person who commissioned the frescoes, most probably archbishop Sava III, had the entrance to the porch decorated with the figures of the two princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul, who are often represented around church entrances. In churches of Milutin's era, we find them in that spot in Bogorodica Ljeviška, Dragutin's chapel at Djurdjevi Stupovi, Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos in Thessaloniki and the katholikon of Chilandar. In the others – Nagoričino, Gračanica, St. Nikita – they were moved further into the naos and placed opposite the iconostasis. In the Annunciation church of Chilandar these two figures flanked another entrance, that leading to the altar space. In Žiča, Peter and Paul appear in a rare iconographic form: as in the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid and Gračanica, Peter holds a church above his head while Paul raises high a book of his epistles. The two apostles are shown here as the foundation of the church and teachers of the universe, thus sending across a message of the origins of the Church on earth and its apostolic and conciliar nature. Based on a well known passage from the Gospel of Matthew (16, 18), in the hymns dedicated to the apostles, Peter is celebrated as the guardian of the church, the stone of faith upon which the Lord founded the Church, while Paul is exalted as the foundation of dogma and the first enthroned teacher of the universe. In Byzantine theology Peter and Paul are inseparable, they make a duumvirate, a holy dyad.[130]

Because the Church on earth has, among others, the significance of the Heavenly Temple, each and every entrance into it had the connotation of an entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom, into Heavenly Jerusalem. Christ instructed his disciples many times about the ways in which this Kingdom can be reached, pointing to the ways of children as examples to be followed (Matthew 18, 2–4). Supplemented with the appropriate words, the scene showing Christ, a child and the apostles is painted above the entrance as a message of innocence, purity of heart and humility to all who are entering the church. And, as an example of those constant in their faith, the vault of the entrance porch of Žiča is decorated with the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste on the frozen lake, rewarded by Christ with wreaths of martyrdom and triumph, a scene well known and often used in portal programmes.[131]

Portraits of ktetors fit rather well into this theme because, through their efforts in the construction and endowment of Žiča, they joined the ranks of those who fortified the Church on earth. Its first founders, king Stefan Prvovenčani and his son, king Radoslav (his father's co-regent at the time the first layer of frescoes was painted), are depicted next to the entrance. Their two charters issued to this church are written out in fresco on the walls of the porch, listing their numerous gifts to this church. Although there are no direct testimonies in the written sources, it is beyond doubt that, together with archbishop Jevstatije II, king Milutin and archbishop Sava III played an important role in the restoration of Žiča. Their merits in this undertaking were recorded in an unusual and novel manner: the east wall of the porch, above the entrance to the narthex, is decorated with an illustration of Anatolios's Christmas sticheron "Christ is being born in Bethlehem today", the text of which is written right above. It speaks of the celestial powers, the earth and men rejoicing in the Incarnation of the Logos while wise men offer their gifts, shepherds are in awe and people cry "Glory to the Lord on high and peace on earth, good will among men". The iconography of this poetic theme was, of course, formulated before Žiča, as attested by XIII century examples from the Blachernae in Arta and the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, so that, when it appeared in Žiča, this solution was already well known. In Ohrid, newborn Christ is exalted by the people, the monks and the archpriests of the earth while in Žiča this role is entrusted to the ecclesiastics lead by archbishop Sava III and the courtiers lead by king Milutin. Thus, a hymnographi-

95
Žiča, *Apostle Peter*, around 1310

cal theme was rendered in a historiated form, it was transformed into a representation of a solemn Christmas service performed by the archbishop and attended by the Serbian king. There are many meanings to this scene: it exalts the Virgin and newborn Christ at the entrance to the church which is the image of Heavenly Kingdom and the Kingdom of the Lord on earth, it shows the perfect harmony of the Church and the State in offering praise to God and, finally, it compares the ktetors, Sava III and Milutin, to those who offered their gifts to Christ in Bethlehem. Hence, this fresco from Žiča ranks among the most beautiful representations of ktetorship in ancient Serbian art, rendered in the guise of a church service and supplemented with the words of the Christmas hymn.[132]

Such an accomplished and interesting choice of subjects was not going to be repeated in the decoration of entrances of Milutin's later churches. In certain cases it was given different formulations. The space directly surrounding the entrance to the church of St. George in Nagoričino displays none of the already familiar themes. There are, however, others which we have not yet discussed. Among the numerous figures of monks painted in the lowest zone of the narthex that of St. Pachomios stands out. It appears next to the doorway with an angel to whom he shows his monastic habit. It seems that this scene was of particular importance to the monks of Nagoričino because the text on the angel's scroll is written out in Serbian. The ktetor's composition seems to have been painted with even greater care. It exalts king Milutin as a pious ruler who upholds the church of Christ by raising many sanctuaries and defending it from the infidels. His guardians, St. Stephen the Protomartyr, the Virgin (of the Mediatrix type) and St. Georgios Gorgos, intercede before Christ on behalf of such a king. The standing figure of Christ is signed as the Saviour and, in the words written out on his open book (John 8, 12; 46–48), he promises salvation to those who follow him. The location of the above mentioned figures of saints on the east wall, around the passageway connecting the narthex and the naos, expresses the hope of all the faithful entering the church that they shall attain eternal life, be united with Christ the Light and that, in doing so, they shall have the mediation of the Virgin.

In Nagoričino, for the first time in a Serbian church, and this seems to be the oldest known example found in any church of the Byzantine cultural sphere in general, we find an illustration of the Menologion, an extensive group of images covering the entire cycle of the ecclesiastical year with all of its

immovable feasts.[133] The question of its emergence in monumental art of the late Byzantine period still awaits a satisfactory answer, its place in the programme of decoration of Christian temples has yet to be determined and its meaning is still insufficiently clear. However, regardless of its iconographic form, the particularities which vary from monument to monument and the different influences of the synaxarion, the fact that it brings together all or almost all the commemorations of saints and feasts which make up the sum of annual services seems to be of great importance. The Menologion thus became a specific image of the Church, its unity, fullness and constancy which made it a suitable subject for the decoration of church entrances. At the same time, the importance of this collection of pictures was equal to that of some of the services performed in the church during the annual cycle and it seems that the symbolic value of the Menologion exceeded in significance its other connotations, utilitarian or prophylactic.

Another endowment of king Milutin's with a narthex, although a very narrow one, is Gračanica. Because of the restricted space it contains only a small number of scenes, all grouped around royal imagery and the Last Judgement. The central royal scene is located in the passage connecting the narthex and the naos and shows king Milutin, offering a model of the building to Christ, and his wife, queen Simonida. Accepting the gift, Christ, located in the apex of the arch, blesses the royal couple and sends them crowns, born by two angels. Hence, the devout act of ktetorship is joined here with a representation of heavenly investiture. The origins of the king's authority and the nature of his rule become instantly clear to all who enter this church. Political reasons covered with a veil of state and ecclesiastical ideology inspired the emergence of two other scenes located in the vicinity of the one just mentioned, namely on the east wall of the narthex: king Milutin with his son Konstantin and his parents and the Nemanjid family tree. Based on elements of royal iconography and metaphors borrowed from literature, these representations were aimed at spreading an idea present already in the ktetor's portrait – that of king Milutin's holy lineage and the longevity of his ancestors who ruled by the grace of God – as well as proclaiming the king's intentions that his son should continue to rule from the Serbian throne in the same spirit. Since there are no other themes in the narthex of Gračanica, it is possible, although not necessarily so, that the Last Judgement located on the opposite, west wall is

96
Žiča, *Apostle Paul*, around 1310

also associated with the portraits of the Nemanjids as an image of the ”fear of the Lord” instilled into them by the founder of the dynasty. The extensive Last Judgement, a theme mentioned at every liturgy and the subject of various lections, especially those of the second week before Lent, memorial and other services, was a reminder of the Second Coming of Christ and his Judgement, whereupon the souls of all the men who lived on earth throughout time are going to be weighed and the sinners cast into eternal darkness while the righteous shall enter into the light and the Garden of Eden – all of which is actually represented on the walls of Gračanica. As in Nagoričino, Christ the Terrible Judge holds a gospel book opened at the passage promising salvation to his followers, for he is the Light of the World, and eternal darkness to all the others. According to the custom of the day, great truths were expressed through examples adopted from the distant past so that Christ's judgement of the sinners is supplemented with its archetype, a scene on the east wall in which the prophet Elijah kills the false prophets on the Kisson stream (I Kings 18, 21–40), while an image of Job on the dunghill appears as an Old Testament model of the righteous man who attains salvation.[134] There are not many other representations in the small narthex of Gračanica, regularly depicted in that space in those days. The painters transferred some of the most prominent holy ascetics into the parekklesion together with other scenes which were more suitable for the decoration of entrance spaces: prophet Elijah being fed by a raven in the desert, David's penitence, an illustration of the ”Be as this child” parable and others.

The programme of the Chilandar narthex is quite different. Some of the themes, like the Old Testament righteous in the domes and the archetypes under them, are found in other early XIV century churches as well. The paintings on the east wall convey ideas related to church entrances. The godly and pious act of the ktetor, inspired by Divine Wisdom, is performed in emulation of the temple raised by Divine Wisdom herself (Proverbs 9, 1) and an image of that temple, with a figure of Solomon, is located above the portrait of king Milutin. In fact, all those who took part in the raising this temple in Chilandar, inspired by faith and instructed by Divine Wisdom, namely St. Symeon Nemanja, St. Sava and king Milutin (with his descendants painted later), as well as the emperor Andronikos II and his grandson and co-regent Andronikos III, are gathered around the throne of the Virgin with Christ in her arms. The spacious narthex provided enough room for a large number of martyrs, divided up into their usual calendar groups, holy doctors and monks, including those who lived in ascesis right there, on Mount Athos, like St. Athanasios (assuming the place of honour by the entrance), Peter the Athonite and Paul of Xeropotamou, as well as two saints held in especially high reverence there, St. Luke of Stiris and David of Thessaloniki.

The Athonite milieu probably precluded the appearance of holy women in nartheces and required that a lot of space be set aside for scenes from the lives of celebrated monks from Palestine and Egypt, homelands of the anchorites. Short cycles made up of such scenes were distributed on the vaults. Even though they are, naturally, based on their vitae, these cycles are not hagiographical in the strict sense of the word. Their aim is to set examples for the monks, to teach and support them in the difficult temptations and renouncements they were undergoing and to elevate their spirit in faith. Since all these scenes appear on the layer of painting created at the beginning – of the XIX century we will not discuss their iconography, although it is probable that they did display similar solutions also in the early XIV century and that their didactic nature must have been equally significant. Four scenes from the life of St. Euphrosynios, a humble cook, are represented here – those tied to the dream vision of Euphrosynios in heaven that one of his brethren had. The vita of St. Macarios of Alexandria provided a textual base for the scenes showing his feats which may seem quaint today but certainly do stress his great virtues of renouncement and serenity and the power of his faith. After killing a snake he condemns himself to standing in a mosquito infested swamp, heals the head of a cleric, scolds monks, meets some old demons on his way to Kypotaphion, exorcises them from that place and is exalted because of his extreme fasting. Other great anchorites were also celebrated for their battles against demons. Thus, St. Dorotheus managed to chase demons out of the water by making a sign of the cross. Two other miracles of his are represented in the narthex of Chilandar – the one with bread in the workshop and that which occurred while he was fixing his shed. According to the Chilandar fresco which follows the text of his vita, St. Nathaniel discovers a demon disguised as a soldier. Similar feats were also the source of fame of St. Macarios the Great who, among other things, managed to break the spell cast on the wife of some man and reprimanded his brethren for not noticing the devil's traps and failing to recognise the spellbound woman in the mare before them, all for the lack of faith. We also find a short episode from the life of

one holy man told in four scenes rendering his encounter with the bandit. St. Anthony the Great is the protagonist of two stories related to St. Paul the Simple and St. Paul the Theban which exalt the modesty, the common miracles and the common love that monks are supposed to nurture. Events from the lives of those two saints, rendered in a very lively manner, served as the basis for the creation of interesting and didactic images: St. Paul the Simple meets St. Anthony, they exchange blessings, work together, weave palm leaves, share their bread and together perform a miracle on the youth possessed by a demon. Anthony's encounter with St. Paul the Theban is quite different. First, he searches for him for a long time, meets a satyr on the way, asks a centaur about the whereabouts of the hermit and is led to him by a wolverine. Finally, Anthony meets him and both are miraculously fed by a raven. The last two scenes are related to Paul's death: Anthony first sees two angels carrying Paul's soul to heaven and then buries Paul's body. Finally, in scenes referring to St. Paphnutios and St. Pachomios the emphasis is placed on their instruction of the brethren and the events which took place in their monasteries. Such examples of lives in pious asceticism lead by celebrated monks and of their miracles were quite rare in Byzantine art and were mostly tied to the monastic milieu. They appear either in churches or parekklesia dedicated to these saints (a cycle of St. Symeon the Stylite in Zelve in Cappadoccia, a cycle of St. David Garedžreli in Udabno in Georgia, both from the X century; a cycle of St. Sabas the Sanctified in the north parekklesion of Žiča, 1220–1221, repainted during the days of king Milutin, a cycle of St. Euthymios in the parekklesion dedicated to him in St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, 1303). At times they are also found in entrance spaces of various churches, in the form of individual scenes: the Meeting of St. Onuphrios and St. Paphnutios in the north-west part of the south porch of Veljusa (XII century), the Meeting of St. Anthony and St. Paul the Theban in the narthex of the church of the Forty Martyrs in Turnovo (XIV century); the Miracle of St. Gerasimos with the Lion in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos. The scenes painted in Chilandar also belong to this group of representations based on the lives of celebrated monks. However, as opposed to the scenes from the full hagiographical cycles, their nature is more didactic than liturgical. It should also be noted that the narthex of Chilandar displays the largest collection of such scenes in late medieval art.[135]

In those days, spaces around entrances were mostly decorated with standard themes demonstrating only

97
Gračanica, *Christ the Terrible Judge*, 1319–1321

98
Staro Nagoričino, *Christ the Saviour*, 1315–1317

99
Prizren, Bogorodica Ljeviška, *Angel*, 1309–1313

a few interesting variations. Patron saints were usually rendered above western portals (the following remain today – St. Achilleios in Arilje, the Virgin in Ljeviška and in Sušica, St. Georgios Tropaiophoros in Nagoričino) while images of the Virgin with Christ in her arms or Christ himself in half-figure were usually placed above the entrances leading to the naos. In Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos the Virgin is located in the first zone, perhaps because there is no lunette above the entrance, so that she appears in the company of St. Peter and St. Paul, the church patron and other saints. However, the custom of placing fresco-icons of the Virgin and Christ on either side of the portal was more prevalent in those days, as seen in Nagoričino and Chilandar. At times they were joined by the patron of the church – in Arilje, Nagoričino and Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos. Archangels, guardians of church entrances, could also appear beside them. In Arilje and Chilandar the archangel Michael is shown with a sword in his hand. In Chilandar, Gabriel is there beside him, writing out the words intended for those entering the temple. The other side of the portal of the same church, i.e. the lunette facing the naos, was decorated with an image of the Virgin (of the Holy Gate type) shown in half-figure and with her arms raised. The translation of certain images from the iconostasis to the west entrance is typical of Serbian art of king Milutin's era. This is exactly what happened with the figures of Christ, the Virgin and the holy patron in Nagoričino, Arilje, Chilandar and Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos. It was also typical for portal themes to migrate in the direction of the altar. Some themes which were previously usually depicted in the narthex were transferred to the west wall of the naos and thus remained tied to the west part of the church. On the west wall of Gračanica St. Sava the Serbian is joined by St. Constantine and Helena while in the katholikon of Chilandar we find next to them the apostles Peter and Paul, a Synaxis of the Archangels and a half-figure of Christ Pantokrator above the entrance. The text written out on the open page of his gospel book (John 10, 9) gives him the meaning of the Gate. In Gračanica and St. Nikita the archangels are transferred from the entrance to the west pair of piers in the naos. In Nagoričino, the east sides of the same pair of piers, those facing the iconostasis, are decorated with figures of the apostles Peter and Paul and the evangelists. In Gračanica, they are joined by several other apostles among whom the figure of St. John the Theologian is given special prominence. In Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos, Chilandar and Gračanica he also appears in the vicinity of the altar. Opposite

him in Gračanica we find the figure of apostle Andrew.

The way a church entrance was linked to the iconostasis, through related subject matter chosen for the decoration of these two spaces, is certainly not accidental in medieval writings the first is referred to as ὡραῖαι πύλαι and that leading from the naos to the altar ἅγιαι πύλι or ἅγια θύρια, with certain, although not always identical, rites related to them.[136] Most often they carried across messages of founding the Church on earth and mediation which were expressed through the images of Christ, the Virgin, John the Prodromos, patron saints and others. It is not known whether in Serbian churches dating from around 1300 such images were decorated in the manner of icons intended for the iconostasis, because they have not been preserved in their original positions, but this seems to be highly probable, judging at least by the Chilandar icons which are now kept in the treasury of this monastery. What's more, even the stone altar screens have mostly vanished without a trace, the best preserved iconostasis of this type being that of Nagoričino with its consequently walled up intercolumnal spaces and its fresco-icons. The original icons have vanished from the stone iconostasis of Chilandar, as have those from Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos. Only minor traces remain of the original iconostasis of Arilje and apparently those of Kraljeva crkva and Banjska. Following a tradition established in Komnenian times, during this period of Serbian art images surrounding the entrance to the altar were set apart from the adjoining frescoes in both size and a special painted decoration. It is, therefore, unquestionable that they were actually regarded as icons. The intercessory and at the same time representative nature of the paintings in the east part of the naos in Arilje, in front of the entrance to the altar, is a quality already registered in earlier Serbian art of the XIII century. Opposite the towering figure of Christ rendered in a frontal stance and with a rolled up scroll in his hand stands the Virgin Mediatrix with her arms raised in prayer. Behind her is the archdeacon Stephen. Similar solutions are found in Studenica (1208/1209) or Sopoćani (1263–1268). On the other side, behind the figure of Christ we see the patron of the church, St. Achilleios, St. John the Prodromos and a figure of one bishop, probably St. Nicholas.[137] Frontally facing the onlooker, the winged John the Prodromos, shown here carrying his decapitated head and a scroll inscribed with the words of a sticheron dedicated to his memory, was always the assurance of the faithful. The others in this line of saints are there in the func-

100
Čučer, St. Nikita, *St. Nicetas*, around 1320

tion of patrons of the church and its parekklesa, first of all St. Achilleios and then St. Stephen and St. Nicholas. A similar choice and distribution of saints is found in Žiča. Along with two fresco-icons of the Virgin and Christ, encased by ornate painted arches, we see the figures of St. Stephen the Protomartyr and St. Sabas the Sanctified, the two patron saints of the parekklesia located on either side of the naos, represented under similar arcades. By their side we find two highly respected holy warriors, St. George and St. Demetrios, long venerated in Serbia.[138]

In Milutin's later churches interesting novelties were introduced to the programme of decoration surrounding the entrance to the altar. Thus, on the east wall of the naos in Gračanica, right next to the Virgin with child and a standing figure of Christ without any specific attributes (the inscription Pantokrator is a later addition, probably from the XVI century, when the head of Christ was repainted), there are figures of saints whose cults were apparently held in high reverence among the Serbs. Apart from St. Stephen the Protomartyr, the patron saint of the ruling dynasty who assumed the place of honour both in XIII century fresco programmes and those of Milutin's endowments (as indicated by the surviving frescoes from Nagoričino and Chilandar), we find also the figures St. John the Theologian and St. Andrew, the apostles whose cult could have been translated to Serbia from Constantinople at around this time. This line of saints ended with the figures of holy warriors, St. George and St. Demetrios, whom we have already seen standing on significant locations in Žiča. The patron saints of the two lateral parekklesia, St. Nicholas and the Virgin, were shown on the piers, opposite the entrances to these two rooms. The entrance to the altar of Gračanica was marked with the frontal figures of the authors of the two liturgies, St. Basil and St. John Chrysostomos, painted on the inner faces of the piers.[139]

Even greater novelties appeared in Staro Nagoričino. The iconostasis has preserved its original decoration: fresco-icons were painted on either side of the bema doors showing half-figures of the patron saints of this church, St. Georgios Tropaiophoros and the Virgin with Christ (the epithet Pelagonitissa was written later, at the same time when St. Georgios received the attribute Diasoritis), while the pilaster strips on either side of the iconostasis display the usual representations of Christ and the Virgin. Christ, signed as the Merciful, and the text on his open book (Matthew 11, 28) are the only reminders of the old theme of intercession. The Virgin, on the other hand, received the epithet Kaicharitomene which underlined even more her involvement in the already very pronounced theme of the Incarnation surrounding the Nagoričino iconostasis. Namely, the upper parts of the pilaster strips are decorated with images from the Annunciation scene. Right below the protagonists are two half-figures of Old Testament prophets, Daniel and Jacob, both with unrolled scrolls of their prophecies of Christ. Moreover, Daniel is accompanied by a rock bearing an image of Christ Emmanuel while Jacob holds a star in which the guise of Emmanuel appears once again. The iconography of the prophets equipped with scrolls and prefigurations of Christ was borrowed from the illustration of "The Prophets from Above" hymn and their appearance in Nagoričino is entirely congruent with the spirit of early XIV century tendencies to use every opportunity available to exalt the role of the Virgin in the ministry of Salvation and to "historiate" this mission through the use of images inspired by sacred poetry. The Virgin is called Kaicharitomene, i.e. full of grace, gentleness and sweetness, as she was in Nazareth when the archangel Gabriel brought her the good news that she is to give birth to Christ, the Saviour of the world. Hence, the epithet she bears in Nagoričino is not barely a sign of translation of her cult to Serbia from the Constantinopolitan monastery of the same name, but rather a sign of the inclusion of her image from the iconostasis in the Incarnation theme which is a part of the overall programme of decoration of this church. The same reasons certainly lay behind the painting of the Synaxis of the Archangels south of the iconostasis, with Michael and Gabriel holding between them a medallion with an image of Emmanuel, the incarnated Logos.[140]

In those days, the theme of intercession was most clearly expressed in the church of St. Nikita near Skoplje – through the images of Christ and the Virgin standing in their usual places by the iconostasis. The holy patron was transferred to the north wall and singled out by an old fashioned ornamental frame. The Virgin is designated as the Suppliant and shown addressing Christ in precisely that manner. He is designated as the Merciful, thus indicating that the prayers of the Virgin and the hopes of those devoutly addressing these fresco-icons shall be answered. Representations of the Virgin Paraklissa and Christ the Saviour by the iconostasis of Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos or the west entrance of Nagoričino had the same meaning. A stronger influence of liturgy on the decoration of this part of the church is felt in Chilandar and St. Nikita where the standing figures surrounding the iconostasis are surmounted by a representation of the Anapeson. Based on Old Testament

texts and further developed and widely used in hymns sung on the Saturday of the Holy Week, this theme, which speaks of Christ falling briefly asleep, as a lion, and preparing to rise immediately, received adequate iconographic treatment and prominence at about the same time it appeared in the above mentioned Serbian monasteries. Like all new themes based on a wide choice of poetic texts, at first its iconographic forms were not always identical although its message always remained the same: the sleeping Christ Emmanuel, most often with eyes wide open, represents Christ lying in his tomb, awaiting resurrection. In Chilandar, he is shown resting on a red mattress. Above him we find the Virgin with outstretched arms, lamenting his death, as well as two angels, one holding a rhypidion and the other the spear, sponge and cross. The two trees in the background are a sign of paradise which was the dwelling place of Christ's soul during the three day which his body spent in the grave. There is no accompanying inscription on this scene. In the church of St. Nikita, a metochion of Chilandar, the same scene is more abridged: apart from Christ and the Virgin we find just one angel holding a rhypidion in the shape of a fan, accompanied by an inscription reading: ”He did lie down and fell asleep like a lion”. In monuments of a slightly later date this scene is found either above the entrance (the Protaton, around 1300; Vatopedi, 1312/1313) or in the altar (Omorphi Ecclesia in Athens, end of the XIII century) and it could have been related to the solemn entrance into the church performed in the night between Saturday of the Holy Week and Easter Sunday or, on the other hand, with the laying out of the epitaphion in the naos on the Saturday before Easter. Still, whatever location it assumed in a church, this scene was always an image of Christ whose resurrection is awaited so that, at the liturgical level, it always conveyed to the faithful a message of hope for their own salvation.[141]

Frescoes Surrounding Episcopal Thrones and Thrones of the Hegoumenoi

Some of the saints painted in the lowest register stood out among others either because of their unusual choice or because of the painterly treatment they received. An adequate explanation of this phenomenon is not always easy to find because today we know only too little about the sacred topography of medieval church interiors. Still, there can be no doubt that the special fixtures found therein, such as tombs, with or without the pertaining funerary monuments, proskinitaria, tables on which icons and relics were displayed, or thrones upon which the bishops and hegoumenoi sat were surrounded by befitting images. A little more is known only about the decoration surrounding monumental tombs of rulers, archbishops, bishops and far less about the decoration surrounding agiasma fonts, proskinitaria and tables intended for the display of relics.[142] The surviving thrones of archbishops (Peć, around 1346 and 1375) and hegoumenoi (Dečani, around 1330) are located either in the south-west part of the space beneath the dome or in the narthex and the programmes of fresco decoration surrounding them reveal quite specific intentions.[143] The above mentioned examples of a somewhat later date indicate that archbishops, bishops and hegoumenoi had the images of Christ, the Virgin and those saints which they held in highest veneration painted around their throne located in the south-west part of the naos.

Remains of episcopal thrones have also been preserved in several churches of king Milutin's era. In the oldest cathedral church on the territory of Ras, that dedicated to St. Peter, located in the vicinity of present-day Novi Pazar, a figure of St. John the Merciful appears in the south-west corner of the naos, on a layer of frescoes dating from the last decades of the XIII century. What immediately strikes the eye is the fact that he is the only bishop depicted in the naos and that his halo is the only one decorated with tiny cross – like circular ornaments which may have once been covered with applications made of some expensive material. Such a treatment of this figure, probably commissioned by the acting bishop of Ras, was certainly aimed at bestowing special honour upon St. John the Merciful. Because we do not know the exact date at which this fresco was painted, we can not say which of the archpriests of this diocese occupied the episcopal throne of Ras at the time of its creation. It is, nonetheless, beyond any doubt that his throne must have stood in front of the mentioned fresco because traces of it have been preserved in that spot to this day. Trusting in the saint's intercession, that unidentified bishop chose to decorate the space in which he sat during services with a figure of St. John, painted directly opposite that of Christ, and mark both figures with the epithet Merciful. He also surrounded his throne with images of holy monks and doctors.[144]

The fresco decoration of the south choir of Arilje has long been the subject of scholarly attention because of its truly uncommon choice of saints. Although there are no material remains or archaeological

data, we assume that the throne of the bishops of Moravica must originally have stood in front of the fresco image of the Virgin with child painted on the west wall with a figure of St. John Chrysostomos beside it. In that way, bishop Jevsevije would have followed the custom of surrounding episcopal thrones with images of Christ (located opposite the throne, on the east wall), the Virgin and highly venerated bishops (in this case a Constantinopolitan bishop and author of the liturgy, St. John Chrysostomos, and a bishop of Larissa, St. Achilleios, the patron saint of the church, who, incidentally, did not switch places with John the Prodromos without good reason). Such a programme expresses his hope in the intercession of the Virgin and underlines the apostolic origins of his office which make him a disciple of Christ himself and a follower of the apostles and eminent Orthodox bishops, guided by faith in the crucified Christ, symbolised by the cross held between St. Constantine and Helena.[145]

Because the piers in the south part of the naos of Bogorodica Ljeviška are not all preserved, our knowledge of the programme of the lowest zone of frescoes is only partial. Still, we do have an unusual choice of saints preserved on the south-west pier of the space beneath the dome which could be interpreted as a result of personal intervention on the part of the acting bishop of Prizren. As in similar cases of episcopal thrones, a figure of Christ, with no epithet preserved beside it, is painted on the side of the pier facing the altar. Next to him we find the prophet Daniel and one holy doctor, probably Cosmas. We do not know the identity of the bishop who succeeded Sava on the episcopal throne of Prizren in 1309. Although there are no such records in historical sources, his name may have been Daniel. On the other hand, could it perhaps have been Arsenije, first mentioned in 1317?

There was yet another bishop in those days who had the spot at which he sat during services decorated in a special, yet unpretentious manner. Based on information found in the charter of Gračanica, we know that the acting bishop of Lipljan, Ignjatije, was king Milutin's chief counsellor and aide during the restoration of this cathedral church. Apart from what the king recorded, virtually nothing more is known of bishop Ignjatije but it has already been noted that he did hold his holy patron, St. Ignatios Theophoros, in especially high reverence. Not only did he have his figure painted among the bishops celebrating holy liturgy, he also placed a figure of Ignatios above his own future tomb in the south parekklesion and once more next to the Virgin Mediatrix on the north face of the south pier in the naos. Like the unidentified bishop of Ras who was active in the decoration of the church of St. Peter, Ignjatije, too, had the halo of his patron saint decorated in a special manner, this time with gold, thus singling out his figure which stands out among those surrounding it. Judging by the location of the figure of St. Ignatios, we assume that the south part of the naos of Gračanica must have housed the episcopal throne.[146] Seated upon it, the bishop would have been surrounded by the Virgin interceding on his behalf (otherwise, her location in the church is difficult to understand) and by his guardian saint, St. Ignatios, while facing directly the figure of Christ painted next to the iconostasis. On the west face of the same pier we find St. Hermolaos who could also have been related to the episcopal throne, as in Peć and Arilje.

Finally, it is only through the intervention of hegoumenos Venjamin that we can explain one of the representations of St. George in Nagoričino which survived in quite a ruined state. Although the patron saint of this church appears in its programme of decoration several times, and in all the befitting places (in the lunette above the entrance, next to the ktetor, a bit further as his intercessor before Christ and, finally, on the iconostasis), he also appears quite unexpectedly on the west face of the south pier, in a solemn and representative stance, encased by an embossed arch decorated with stylised palmettes and resting on painted, fresco capitels. As opposed to all the surrounding figures of saints, his is the only one with an inscription in Serbian. Such a treatment of this figure and its location in the south part of the church point to hegoumenos Venjamin as the one responsible for the painting of the fresco-icon of St. George in this spot and its exceptional decoration. The space in the vicinity of this painting probably housed the seat of the hegoumenos, a fixture usually found in this part of the church, so that the patron saint of the church could also assume the role of the personal guardian saint of hegoumenos Venjamin.[147]

Choirs of Saints

Apart from the saints who were chosen, because of the intercession they promised, by the ktetors, bishops and hegoumenoi to mark the significant spots or to stand in their immediate midst in churches entrusted to their care – whose figures were sometimes additionally lavishly decorated with expensive materials and encased by ornamental frames which give them

the appearance of icons – numerous other figures of saints appeared on church walls as well. Among them we find holy martyrs, warriors, doctors, bishops, monks, hermits, stylites, holy women, poets and many others. During the Proskomide rite holy particles were set apart in their honour and placed by those of Christ and the Virgin and their names commemorated on that occasion, either individually or in groups. In king Milutin's churches there are no major divergences from the standard iconography of their portrayal. On the other hand, in the spirit of the new art, their numbers are considerably larger while only a few are equipped with conspicuous signs of greater prominence. Very often they are grouped according to type, forming corporations identical to those mentioned at church services, and only occasionally specific choices of saints are predominant. Thus, great monastic churches – such as Chilandar on Mount Athos – were decorated with a large number of figures of holy monks while those of holy women were either very rare or altogether excluded from their programmes. At times, even the dedication of a church could influence the choice of saints: the lowest zone of the parekklesion of St. Sabas of Jerusalem in Žiča is mostly reserved for figures of holy monks while that of the parekklesion of St. Stephen the Protomartyr in the same church belongs, almost exclusively, to figures of martyrs. Meanwhile, the first zone of the parekklesion of St. Nicholas in Arilje is set aside only for images of holy bishops. Similar solutions are found elsewhere, too, and they come as no exception in either Serbian or Byzantine art.

In the order in which they are mentioned at church services, Christ, the Virgin, the archangels and "all celestial incorporeal powers" had their designated places in the dome, the apses and around the iconostasis and church entrances. They could also appear in unexpected places, perhaps in imitation of famous icons or equipped with special epithets. Such is the case with Christ and the Virgin on the piers of Ljeviška and their preserved inscriptions designating Christ as the Guardian of Prizren and the Virgin as the Helper of the Poor or the Grigorovoithissa. The same applies to the enthroned figure of the Virgin with child on the north wall of the sanctuary of Sušica, Christ on one of the naos piers of Arilje, close to the portraits of the Nemanjids, Christ the Saviour and Virgin Mediatrix in Nagoričino and another figure of the same type in Gračanica as well as the Virgin of Passion in Žiča, etc. In the course of previous centuries prophets were also represented in domes but in the art which emerged around 1300

101
Arilje, *Christ*,
1295/1296

102
Prizren, Bogorodica Ljeviška, *Christ the Guardian of Prizren*, 1309–1313

their images appeared more and more in other parts of church interiors as well. They entered the complex compositions of poetic-liturgical character such as "The Prophets from Above" in Bogorodica Ljeviška or the Dormition in Nagoričino. As an archetype of Christ the Archpriest and his clergy, some of them were to enter the altar space or be depicted in its vicinity (Petrova crkva, Žiča, katholikon of Chilandar, Nagoričino, Gračanica, St. Nikita). At times their prophecies were there to explain the great mysteries of Christ's Incarnation and Sacrifice, as at the entrance to the naos of Chilandar, in Arilje or Sts. Peter and Paul on the Lim, in the manner typical of Komnenian art. Very rarely they appear in the lowest register of frescoes, usually in connection with the surrounding scenes, as exemplified by Isaiah and the Baptism of Christ in the narthex of Chilandar. Finally, St. John the Prodromos is normally depicted in the vicinity of the altar screen, where he constitutes a single ensemble together with Christ and the Virgin. Only in Ljeviška and Gračanica his image appears in the apses of the south and the north parekklesion respectively.

Almost as a rule, the apostles, normally painted in the lowest register, were represented by their princes, Peter and Paul, whose figures stand close to entrances or on naos piers, opposite the altar space. At times, they are joined by all (Nagoričino) or just some of the evangelists. In Serbia of those days there are no depictions of the seventy apostles although their images can be found in some of the contemporary Byzantine churches (the Virgin Hodegetria in Aphendiko in Mistra, for example). The disciples of the apostles, namely the holy bishops and ecumenical teachers, were depicted almost exclusively in the sanctuaries of churches or parekklesia. The most prominent among them, mostly the participants of the First Ecumenical Council, were included in the composition of Celebration of Holy Liturgy while others stood in frontal positions on church walls and pilasters or in the drums of domes covering the side chapels adjoining church sanctuaries. The appearance of eminent priests in altar spaces is entirely understandable while the choice of characters is quite variable so that there is no standard solution in representing frontal or half-figures (rarely in the form of fresco-icons) of holy bishops. Images of these saints rarely left the altar space. Only St. Nicholas, a saint always held in high reverence among the Serbs, appears on the south-west pier in the naos of Žiča and on the south pier of Nagoričino. In Chilandar, perhaps intentionally, he is depicted in the naos, close to the figure of St. Symeon Nemanja. In Gračanica, as in Arilje,

103
Peć, Holy Apostles, *The Virgin Merciful with Christ*, around 1300

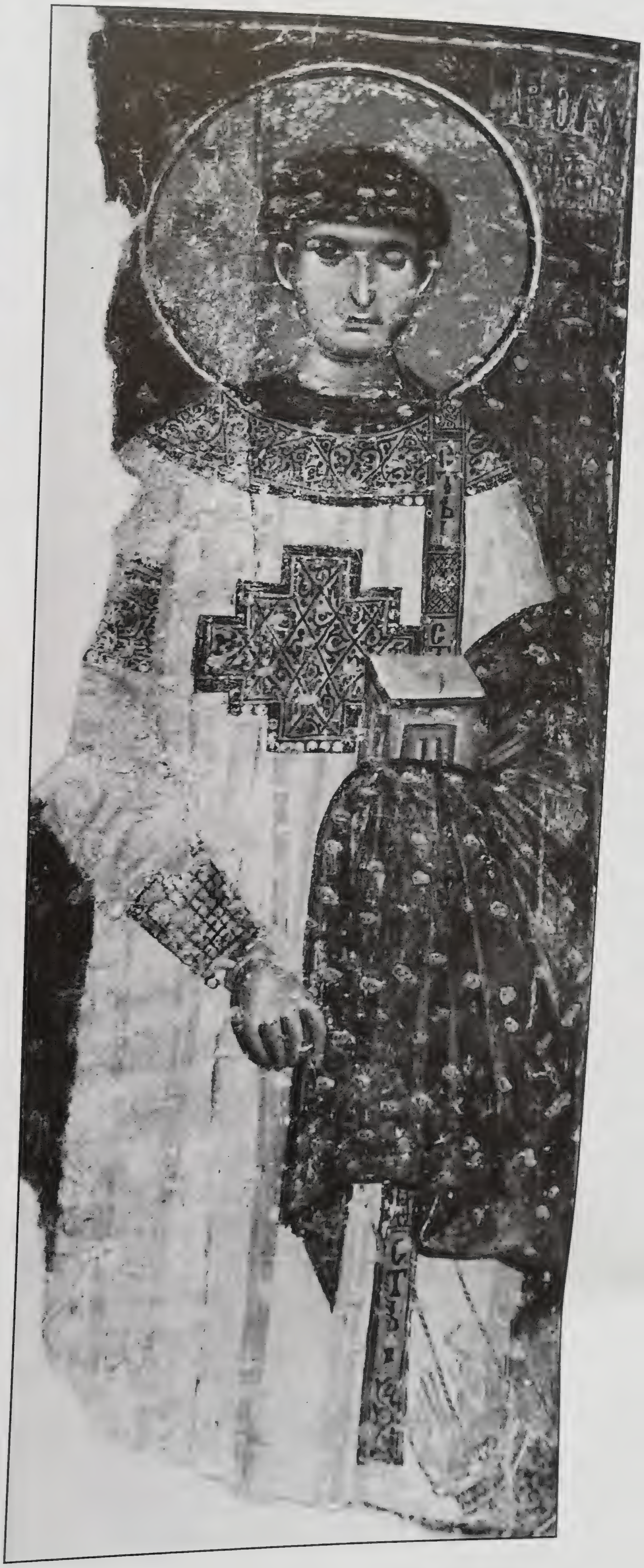
104
Studenica, Kraljeva crkva, *The Virgin with Christ*, 1318–1319

he stands opposite the entrance to the parekklesion dedicated to him. In the south parekklesion of Žiča, on the other hand, he is the only bishop in a group of martyrs. In Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos he is represented next to the entrance to the naos with a verse from the Gospel of John (10, 9) written out on his open book: "I am the door". A large half-figure of this saint in the church of the Holy Apostles in Peć has been associated, and rightfully so it seems, with the entrance to the former church of St. Nicholas which once stood north of it. Later, during the days of archbishop Nikodim, the church of St. Demetrios was raised on that spot. Images of other bishops were rarely found in the naos: except for the patron saint of Arilje, they were tied to episcopal thrones, as in Arilje (St. John Chrysostomos), Petrova crkva (St. John the Merciful) and Gračanica (St. Ignatios). Otherwise, the privilege to be painted in this part of the church was granted only to St. Sava the Serbian, as in Gračanica, St. Nikita and Chilandar. Apart from him, other Serbian archbishops could also be portrayed there but only as a part of episcopall-ecclesiastical themes. Other local and holy bishops remained in the sanctuary, either within the Celebration of Holy Liturgy (Clement of Ohrid and Constantine Kabasilas in Nagoričino and St. Eustathios of Thessaloniki in St. Nikita) or as single, frontally depicted figures: St. Clement in Kraljeva crkva, Bogorodica Ljeviška and apparently Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos, St. Methodios in Ljeviška and St. Eustathios of Thessaloniki in Nagoričino and Gračanica. Naturally, holy bishops were painted in the vicinity of the altar and only in Banjska they appear on the west side of the space beneath the dome, in a string of interconnected medallions. Because they represent the only substantial remains of the fresco decoration of this church, it is difficult to explain the reasons for their emergence in that spot.

The holy protomartyr and archdeacon Stephen is the first on the list of martyrs mentioned during the Proskomide rite. That circumstance and, even more, the fact that he was the patron saint of the Nemanjid family and a saint highly venerated by king Milutin himself, earned him a place of honour in the decoration of churches of this period. Dressed in apostolic garments (except when he is depicted in the altar, among other holy deacons), he appears next to king Milutin in Chilandar (in two instances) and Nagoričino or in the vicinity of the altar in Žiča (in the naos and the parekklesion dedicated to him), Arilje and Gračanica. Figures of numerous other martyrs covered the piers, pilasters, windows, arches and a good part of the two lower registers in the naos, the narthex and the parekklesia. Artists usually chose to depict the most celebrated among them, often seen already in the art of previous centuries. However, if required, they could also portray other personages mentioned in the synaxarion. In doing so they often created smaller groups of saints of the same calendar type. The painters of Arilje distributed the five Persian martyrs on the pilasters, those of Chilandar found a place for them on the walls of the narthex while in Gračanica Michael and Eutychios brought them down to the lowest register of frescoes in the naos. In Chilandar and Nagoričino, as in other churches, the Persian martyrs commemorated on November 2nd were placed close to one another. In Gračanica, on the other hand, the forty martyrs of Sebaste were distributed throughout the second register of frescoes in the form of half-figures. This manner of representing the martyrs of Sebaste was already employed in earlier times (in certain Cappadoccian and Russian churches of the XI and XII centuries, for example) and was also adopted by the unknown painters of the Vatopedi katholikon. Among the martyrs one may find some which are otherwise rarely represented. This does not necessarily have to be regarded exclusively as a result of the special requirements set by the ktetor or some specific intentions on the part of the painters, known only to them. Sometimes answers regarding their appearance are to be found in legends, as is the case with St. Gerontios and St. Polychronia in Nagoričino, supposedly the parents of St. George, the patron saint of this church. In Žiča, in the parekklesion dedicated to the holy martyr Stephen, and in the chapels dedicated to Sts. Demetrios and George, in Bogorodica Ljeviška, the lowest register is reserved exclusively for figures of martyrs. Except for the patron saints of the two parekklesion of Ljeviška, in both Žiča and Prizren they are all dressed in luxurious patrician garments which evoke the idea of the Celestial Court, one of the major themes of Byzantine art around the middle of the XIV century. This is even more interesting because in those days these martyrs were normally depicted only in the guise of holy warriors. The emergence of this phenomenon was already heralded in Arilje and, before it, even in Bogdašići, around 1270, where holy warriors sported expensive cloaks while bearing both crosses and arms. In other churches of Milutin's era there were no such admixtures. Around the middle of the XI century, if not earlier still, some of the martyrs were singled out as the soldiers of Christ serving the Almighty King – as stated in the Greek and Serbian inscriptions above their heads in the katholikon of Chilandar – and were usu-

ally depicted in military dress, bearing arms which were more reminiscent of the Roman legions than of the period in which these paintings were created. These soldiers of Christ's faith were not always described in their vitae as warriors nor were they always represented in military clothing. With the exception of the south parekklesion of Žiča and the upper floor of Ljeviška, in Milutin's churches this company of holy warriors normally consisted of St. George, Demetrios, Theodore Teron and Stratelates, Procopios, Eustathios, Mercurios, Nicetas, Nestor, Arethas, with the participation of some who were otherwise rarely depicted, such as St. Alexander or Christopher. Some of them bear special epithets (St. Georgios Tropaiophoros in Nagoričino, St. Georgios Gorgos in the church of the same name and Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos, St. Demetrios Apokauchos in Nagoričino) which not only invest them with specific meanings but also refer to some of their celebrated icons kept probably in the shrines of Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Skoplje and elsewhere. Holy warriors were usually depicted in the central part of the naos, on its walls and piers, but also in choirs which they sometimes shared with the holy monks (in Arilje and Chilandar). In smaller churches – Sušica, Mušutište, Kraljeva crkva – they were also located in the west bay, spreading all the way to the entrance. Generally speaking, that part of the church should be reserved for holy women martyrs. It is interesting, though, that during the period in question they were most often left out, possibly as a result of Athonite influences – they are not found in any of the Athonite churches with the frescoes from the beginning of the XIV century (the Protaton, Vatopedi, the churches of Chilandar) – or the small dimensions of the churches. Holy women appear only in Bogorodica Ljeviška, Mušutište, Gračanica and Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos. With the exception of the Prizren church, their choice is quite abridged: it seems that only a few figures were painted in Mušutište, in Gračanica it was only St. Thekla, Euphemia, Kyriaki and Barbara (and perhaps two others which appear on the frescoes repainted in the XVI century), in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos we find St. Theodota, Catherine and Irene while in Ljeviška names are preserved beside the figures of St. Barbara, Theodosia, Irene, Paraskevi, Kyriaki and Thekla. They are always depicted bearing the cross of martyrdom in their hands and mostly dressed in luxurious clothes with either wreaths or crowns on their heads. This is based not so much on their vitae as on the desire to represent them as the brides of Christ and residents of the Celestial Court.

Today, the fifth part of the prosphora is dedicated to the memory of the holy fathers who became enlightened through their monastic vows, profusely depicted in churches throughout the Byzantine world, especially from the IX century on. In Serbian churches raised by king Milutin or his contemporaries, holy monks and hermits were also a frequently represented subject rendered in traditional iconographic forms while their choice and distribution were also based on ancient models. There were, of course, minor divergences from standard solutions because, at times, the Serbian milieu introduced certain changes to the choice of personages as well as to their appearance. Almost without exception, this choice focused on the holy monks who were the first to be mentioned in the prayers of the Proskomide, i.e. Sts. Anthony, Euthymios and Sabas the Sanctified, but there were others, too, whose cults grew in popularity during the period in question. In Dragutin's chapel and Žiča, holy stylites appeared near the altar and the apse while in Petrova crkva figures of monks are distributed around the passage connecting the narthex and the naos. There, in Petrova crkva, several figures of monks were also placed in the west conch (the only one identified by an inscription is St. Ephraim, probably the Syrian) while in Arilje they were transferred to the choirs. It should be stressed that around the year 1300 Serbian art had almost entirely discarded the custom of the XII and XIII centuries of depicting the holy monks with unrolled scrolls inscribed with their teachings. The scrolls which they carry from then on are rolled up and, instead of openly displaying their wise sayings, serve only as a reminder of their didactic role. All, or almost all of the holy monks depicted in the west bay of Žiča, about ten of them all together, were represented in that fashion. They are joined by two or three figures of poets, painted on the north wall of the west bay with bundles of rolled up rotuli in their hands or their writing utensils. Three holy poets appear also in the narthex of Nagoričino: Joseph, Cosmas and John of Damascus. The text on the unrolled rotulus of Cosmas – the hymn "More honourable than the cherubim" – refers to the Virgin and is probably related to the neighbouring Dormition. Sts. Cosmas and John of Damascus, with unrolled scrolls, were also painted in the south parekklesion of Gračanica. Cosmas's text is the same as in Nagoričino while the sticheron of St. John also refers to the Virgin, perhaps because of the vicinity of the Annunciation adjoining the two figures. Following XII century models, poet monks John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maiumas, Joseph and Theodore of Stoudion – were also gathered around the Dormi-



105
Thessaloniki, Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos, *St. Demetrios*, 1315–1320

106
Prizren, Bogorodica Ljeviška, *St. Romanus*, 1309–1313

107
Petrova crkva in Ras, *St. Christopher*, around 1280

tion in both Kraljeva crkva and, in smaller numbers, St. Nikita near Skoplje in order to exalt the Virgin through their songs. Because of the special honour bestowed by St. Sava the Serbian upon his holy patron and namesake, St. Sabas the Sanctified, the figure of that saint, the patron of the north parekklesion of Žiča, appears also on the early XIV century layer of frescoes near the iconostasis of the Saviour's church in that monastery. He was depicted once again in the parekklesion dedicated to his memory, together with his usual companions, St. Euthymios and Anthony, and next to St. Theodore of Stoudion. Some less frequently represented holy monks, commemorated on the Saturday of the week before Lent, were distributed on the walls of the south parekklesion of Nagoričino: Sts. Acacios, John Calybites, Poimen, Hilarion, Paul the Simple, Gerasimos, Chariton and Athanasios the Athonite. In Bogorodica Ljeviška figures of holy monks were painted in the aisles and remains of their images are somewhat more numerous in the north aisle. In Gračanica their figures are located in the lateral parekklesia and they are far better preserved. Representations of holy monks can also be found on other locations in this church. In the lowest register of frescoes of the two parekklesia we find the figures of the more celebrated holy monks but the order in which they stand offers no ground for a deeper understanding of these images. Only the holy poets, Cosmas and John of Damascus and Stephen the New, are shown with unrolled scrolls while others appear either with a rolled up rotulus or a cross in their hands or without any sign at all. The roll in the hands of St. Stephen the New is certainly related to the icon of Christ he is holding. The above mentioned holy monks are found in other Serbian churches as well. In the west part of the church of St. Nikita they are joined by Sts. Symeon Nemanja and St. Sava the Serbian. That was the first time that these two Serbian saints were represented among the other holy fathers in whose company they were to be depicted quite often in the XIV and during the subsequent centuries. Synaxarion services adapted to local requirements inspired the inclusion of local anchorites and monks whose cults were restricted to a certain milieu in the programmes of church decoration. That is exactly what took place in Nagoričino where Sts. Prochor of Pčinja and Joachim of Osogovo were portrayed among the celebrated holy monks. Obviously, of all the Serbian monasteries of that era, Chilandar was the most zealous in fostering the cults of holy monks and hermits. Some of them were painted on the west and the north wall of the katholikon naos

while those most highly venerated appeared in the choirs. Moreover, a large number of monks and hermits is depicted in the narthex. Among them we find some who are otherwise rarely represented in mural painting as well as those whose lives are tied to Mount Athos: Sts. Athanasios the Athonite, Sisoes, David of Thessaloniki, Sisinnius, Timothy, Dorotheus, Theonas, Silvanus, Peter the Athonite, Luke of Stiris (who also appears in Gračanica), Joasaph, Barlaam, Callinicus, Moses the Ethyopian, Martinianus, Xenophon, Arcadius, Lazarus, Poimen, Paul in Latros, Memnon, Paul of Xeropotamou and many others. Such a gallery of holy monks, hermits and anchorites, together with the scenes from the lives of some of the famous holy fathers painted on the vaults of the narthex, is unique in Serbian and Byzantine painting of the early XIV century. The iconography of these frescoes can be better understood only after most of the as yet uncleaned Chilandar frescoes are presented to the scholars in their original form. The other Chilandar church dating from the beginning of the XIV century, the fresco decoration of which has already been freed of the more recent layers of paint, displays the same characteristics and the same inclination to celebrate this group of saints. Namely, the entire bottom register of frescoes in the naos of the Annunciation church is reserved for figures of monks. According to the custom of the day, they were all portrayed with rolled up scrolls or, in rare instances, with rolls inscribed with their teachings. The preserved frescoes indicate that Serbian painting of that period observed a specific manner of depicting one type of anchorite, the stylite, which had already been seen in Byzantine art but was consistently implemented only in Serbia. The stylites, positioned on top of their columns, were usually depicted in the lunettes of two-light and three-light windows in Kraljeva crkva of Studenica, Nagoričino, Gračanica and the katholikon of Chilandar. Visually, their columns articulated the colonettes of the window openings. Finally, it should be noted that holy women were very rarely represented in the art of Milutin's era. In fact, St. Mary of Egypt, receiving communion from St. Zosimus, is the only one and even she appears only in Bogorodica Ljeviška and Chilandar.

Among the various saints, a group of holy doctors or anargyroi, who were ascribed the miraculous powers of healing and procuring expeditious aid in times of trouble, was singled out quite early on as a specific entity. Hence, they were normally depicted on conspicuous locations in the church. Sts. Cosmas, Panteleimon and Damian were joined by other anargyroi only occasionally. Their figures usually appeared on the west wall of the naos, as in some of Milutin's churches (Žiča, Sušica, Gračanica), the west part of the naos (Petrova crkva, Bogorodica Ljeviška, Mušutište, Kraljeva crkva, Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos) or in the narthex (Chilandar katholikon, Nagoričino, Sts. Peter and Paul on the Lim). Some were given more privileged positions then others, close to episcopal thrones, either because of the faith of the ktetors in their intercession or because they were priests. Certainly, there must have been other reasons, which we can only surmise today, for their appearance in Dragutin's endowments: among the rare and carefully chosen figures of saints represented in his chapel at Djurdjevi Stupovi, Sts. Panteleimon, Cosmas and Damian are placed above the ktetor while Cyrus and John appear on the adjoining wall. In Arilje their numbers are even greater and they appear both in medallions, as in Djurdjevi Stupovi, or as single figures standing in the space beneath the dome. Names have been preserved by the figures of Sts. Samson, Diomedes, Cyrus, Hermolaos, Panteleimon, Damian and Cosmas.

The cycle of dedication of the particles carved from the prosphora begins with Christ and the Virgin and ends with Joachim and Anne, the Virgin's parents, who gave birth to the one who was chosen by God and who thus prepared the corporeal appearance of Christ on earth. That is why, in king Milutin's endowments, they were often depicted in the east part of the church, in the vicinity of the Annunciation. This scene could also include the figures of king David and king Solomon, representatives of the Virgin's ancestral tribe. At times, as in Nagoričino, for example, other prophets who, in their inspired words, announced the incarnation of Christ could also be included in this composition. In Arilje, Sts. Joachim and Anne appear within a group of such figures surrounding the Annunciation while in Dragutin's chapel at Djurdjevi Stupovi they are depicted around the apse in the form of half-figures. St. Anne with the Virgin in her arms is also found in the east part of the north parekklesion in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos while Joachim and Anne assume a place of honour in the church dedicated to them in Studenica, where they act as mediators between the ktetor and Christ.

Cycles of the Saints

Some of the saints were held in especially high veneration and were thus assigned accordingly promi-

108
Gračanica, *St. Sabas and St. John Climax*, 1319–1321

nent positions in programmes of church decoration, they stood out in size or received special ornaments and sumptuous artistic treatment. Convinced of their expeditious and fruitful intercession before Christ, ktetors used to dedicate churches or parekklesia to their memory and have their figures painted close to their own portraits. In those days churches were very rarely dedicated to Christ or any of his feasts. Sources say that king Milutin raised just one church dedicated to the Ascension of Christ, in Hrusija near Chilandar, and probably took part in the restoration of Žiča which is dedicated to the same feast. By large, most of his churches were dedicated to the Virgin and, if that was not the case, she was at least the patron of one of the parekklesia. Since king Milutin was mostly engaged in restoring older shrines, their original dedications – to the apostles Peter and Paul, John the Prodromos, Demetrios, George, Constantine, Nicetas, Nicholas or Stephen the Protomartyr – probably remained unchanged although some of them received specially chosen epithets or particular functions. Thus, the church of St. Georgios Tropaiophoros raised at Nagoričino was most probably dedicated in memory of the successful military campaigns the king waged in those days and that of St. Stephen in Banjska to the patron saint of many of the king's ancestors and his personal holy guardian, the one who was going to watch over the church which was going to become the final resting place of the king's body. Some of the reasons behind certain dedications can not be entirely elucidated. Arilje, restored by king Dragutin, must probably have housed the relics or at least some particles of the holy relics of St. Achilleios. The church of the Virgin Tricheiroussa in Skoplje was restored by king Milutin in honour of the icon kept in that monastery. In the days of Sava, bishop of Prizren, the church raised above the tomb of the anchorite Prochor of Pčinja was restored. Archbishop Nikodim raised a church dedicated to St. Sava the Serbian. It is not clear why this archbishop dedicated his endowment in Peć to the memory of St. Demetrios, all the more so because it stands on the location of an older church which was apparently dedicated to St. Nicholas. The reasons behind some other dedications, which survive to this day, shall probably remain a mystery.

Except for the churches and parekklesia dedicated to their memory, these chosen saints also received ornate icons which stood on the iconostasis or in its proximity. Church walls were often covered with scenes from their lives, especially those which introduced them to the elected of the Lord.

Whether by chance or as an indication of the original situation, most of the preserved cycles of the saints are related to St. Nicholas. Curious enough, there was just one church, that in Thessaloniki, dedicated to this saint but many of the other churches had parekklesia dedicated to him. With the exception of Nagoričino, a monastery church, all the rest with a parekklesion of St. Nicholas and a pertaining cycle of this saint were cathedrals. Hence, we are inclined to conclude that the famous bishop from Myra in Licia was particularly revered among Serbian bishops although his general popularity, based on his many miracles, was considerably more widespread. A large number of different versions of the vita of St. Nicholas, as well as hagiographies of other saints of the same name, were responsible for the formulation of the well known events from his life and some of his miracles. However, while preserving the basic kernel of the cycle, the illustrations of his vita found in churches of king Milutin's era display some rare divergences from the redaction established in somewhat older Byzantine art.[148] They always begin with the Birth of St. Nicholas, with the mother lying in bed and a scene showing the bathing of the new-born child. Most often, as in Nagoričino and Gračanica, St. Nicholas is shown standing in a bathing vessel. Only in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos the bathing sequence is replaced by a representation of the new-born lying in a crib. In some churches (Ljeviška, Nagoričino, Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos) we find a scene showing the saint going off to school as an introduction to his future high ecclesiastical rank. His rise in church hierarchy is also a common subject and rendered in a similar manner, beginning with his investiture as a deacon, then as a priest and finally as a bishop. Still, most of the scenes of this cycle were reserved for his miracles. The most favoured among them was the one where he saves three girls from degradation, well preserved only in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos in Thessaloniki and, in a different iconographic form, only partly in Nagoričino. Of the other miracles which took place during the saint's lifetime, the rescue of the three generals, the three accidental witnesses of the miracle Nicholas performed in Myra when he saved three wrongly accused innocents from the sword, is never left out. Upon their return to Constantinople, the three generals were accused of conspiracy, imprisoned and sentenced to death. Being in dire straits, they remembered the miracle of the Myrlician bishop, prayed to him for help and finally witnessed the intercession of St. Nicholas. First he appeared in a dream to emperor Constantine, then to eparchos Ablabios and finally to the accused generals. The iconography of

these scenes is similar in all Serbian churches of this period: St. Nicholas holds the sword of the executioner who is about to decapitate the three innocent men; he stands by the bed of Constantine sleeping in his palace (in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos he rests under a tent); in a similar fashion the emperor also appears to Ablabios. The three imprisoned generals could, however, be rendered in a variation of forms. Most often they are shown in the dungeon with their legs bound and only in Arilje they are sleeping in a space encircled by towers. Although the part of the fresco with the prisoners has been ruined in Ljeviška, it seems that it represented the moment St. Nicholas appeared before them. The order of the scenes is juggled up in these monuments so that, instead of beginning with it, the cycle ends with the Miraculous Rescue of the Innocents in Myra. The other cycle of miracles of St. Nicholas inevitably included in the art of this period is that related to the pagan goddess Artemis. Namely, St. Nicholas tore down the temple of Artemis in Myra, as depicted in one of the scenes of his cycle in Gračanica, so that the evil spirit of the goddess brought into the church a vessel containing a liquid which was to destroy the church and the entire town. That night, however, one ship master, on board of his vessel, received in his dream an order to destroy that bottle, in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos St. Nicholas he is shown hurling it into the sea himself. A huge tempest rose thereupon and demons attempted to tear the ship's sails but St. Nicholas came again to the rescue of the sailors, chasing the demons away and calming down the raging sea. In Gračanica and Nagoričino the saint is shown in exactly that capacity, with the sailors on their ship, threatening the demons. From the group of rarely represented miracles of St. Nicholas only two appear in the churches of king Milutin: St. Nicholas saves the city of Myra from hunger by bestowing three coins to a captain for the purchase of wheat (in Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos) and St. Nicholas cuts down a tree infested with demons in Plakoma (in Nagoričino). The cycle ends with the death of St. Nicholas, seen only in two churches – Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos in Thessaloniki and Bogorodica Ljeviška. Its iconography does not differ much from similar death scenes of other saints, especially bishops.

Judging by the fact that king Milutin raised as many as four churches in honour of St. George (in Thessaloniki, Skoplje, Debar and Nagoričino), cycles of this saint were probably often painted in those days. However, such a cycle is well preserved only in Nagoričino and only partly in the parekklesion on the upper floor of Bogorodica Ljeviška. In Prizren only the Torture on the Wheel is better visible as well as a part of some scene involving princess Alexandra. In Nagoričino this cycle offers two novelties: as far as we know, this is the first time that it was painted in the naos and was more extensive than any other cycle of his which appeared in older churches.[149] In Nagoričino it included a great number sufferings of the saint, several miracles and events related to his death. The painters probably relied on models which were based on the form of his vita adopted by the synaxarion of the Constantinopolitan church and most often used in art between the XII and the XIV centuries. That is attested by both the choice and the order of the scenes in the cycle painted at Nagoričino: St. George Before Emperor Diocletian, Torture by Spear, Torture on the Wheel, St. George in the Dungeon, Second Questioning Before Diocletian, Killing of the Emperor's Converted Generals, Torture in the Lime Pit and the rest, in sequence. Still, in the extensive rendering of the sufferings of St. George we come across some scenes which are not described in his synaxarion vita – those tied to Athanasios the magician, for example, which, on the other hand, follow the text of Metaphrastes to the letter. Other scenes, such as the Piercing of the Feet of St. George or the Burial of St. George, were based on rather uncommon texts. The structure of the cycle certainly relied on older models, as attested by the iconography of the scenes with fine analogies in monuments of the XI and XII centuries. The Miracle with the Dragon reached Nagoričino as a finished scene from precisely that epoch. The painters working at Nagoričino treated those old models in a new manner, typical of their age. Not only were the scenes expanded with prologues and epilogues but the number of participants in the depicted events also grew to a great extent. Their clothes were treated with utmost care and the space which they occupied was well defined. At a slightly earlier date, a similar artistic approach was apparently applied in the cycle of St. George painted in his parekklesion located on the upper floor of Bogorodica Ljeviška. On the other hand, there, the choice of scenes is abridged. However, they do include the princess and the Torture on the Wheel which displays a large number of participants while blades on long handles, positioned beneath the small wheel, take the foreground. This only adds to the dramatic tone of the painting.

Opposite the parekklesion of St. George in Bogorodica Ljeviška stands that of St. Demetrios. Thus, this famous pair of martyrs and warriors, painted

109
Staro Nagoričino, *St. Nicholas saving the three innocents from the sword*, 1315–1317

110
Žiča, *Cycle of St. Stephen*, detail, around 1310

together in Byzantine and Serbian art a countless number of times, received a pair of small chapels, one opposite the other, above the exonarthex of Ljeviška. The cult of St. Demetrios was very widespread among the Serbs, as attested by literary works of the XIII and XIV centuries. During Milutin's era he appeared in every church and was sometimes positioned quite close to the iconostasis (Žiča, Gračanica, the Annunciation church in Chilandar) thus numbering among the images of the most highly venerated saints. Apart from the single figures of the saint, there must have been entire cycles dedicated to him. The one in Ljeviška is mostly ruined so that we can not even make any assumptions about its original appear-

ance nor study the iconography in its entirety.[150] The remaining scenes refer to the events tied to the death of the holy guardian of Thessaloniki: St. Nestor kills the giant Lyaius in the presence of emperor Maximian and the death of St. Demetrios. They are very similar to corresponding scenes in other XIV century monuments. The feature that sets the cycle painted in Bogorodica Ljeviška apart is the emergence of the representation of the saint's tomb. It is well known that St. Demetrios was a renowned myroblitos and rivers of pilgrims hurried to his tomb in the martyrium-church in Thessaloniki. The myrrh which flowed from the grave was kept in reliquaries which resembled the shape of the saint's tomb. The tops of theses reliquaries were usually decorated with images of St. Demetrios with arms spread wide, as seen also on the fresco from Prizren. It was more than just a simple copy of a reliquary. On this fresco the top surface of the tomb displays an image of the saint with outstretched arms while the lateral sides are decorated with stylised lilies, circles and perhaps openings from which the myrrh flowed. Two candlesticks with lighted candles stand by the saint's head and in the floor there are indications of the basins into which the myrrh flowed and a low podium. All these elements, at least approximately, render the appearance of the tomb of this holy myroblitos as it looked at the beginning of the XIV century and in the form which was certainly familiar to the ktetors from Prizren and many other Serbs who visited the basilica of St. Demetrios and saw the tomb of this saint.[151] The emergence of such a painting was probably inspired by the services dedicated to the saint which celebrated him as a myroblitos while the actual appearance of his tomb could have been transferred to Prizren by the group of painters from Thessaloniki headed by Michael Astrapas.

The cycle of St. Stephen the Protomartyr is also preserved in just one monument of this epoch, the south parekklesion of Žiča. Originally, it must have been painted also in king Milutin's main endowment, the church of St. Stephen in Banjska. This saint was held in especially high reverence in the Serbian milieu and throughout the XIII century nearly all the major monasteries had parekklesia dedicated to his memory with scenes from his life decorating their walls. Therefore, the painters and ktetors of the XIV century frescoes from Žiča were certainly familiar with their iconography. Although most of Stephen's cycle in this church has been damaged, enough of it remains to show that, rather unusually, it begins on the north, spreads across the west and ends on the south wall. Its scenes were based on passages from the Acts of the Apostles (6, 9–15; 7, 1–60) which describe the martyrdom, teaching and death of one of the first followers of Christ to be ordained by the apostles, as well as on the service of the translation of his relics to Constantinople. Thus, the Žiča cycle includes the events related to the two most significant feasts of St. Stephen, those of December 27th and August 2nd, while being based on currently used texts. The first part of the cycle, on the north wall, followed the sequence of events described in the mentioned New Testament book: Stephen is captured, accused and brought before the high priest where he expounds extensively the history of the Hebrew people and their expectation of the Messiah. The following scene, a sequence of the first, renders the moment St. Stephen is being lead out of the city (Acts 7, 58) while the last one shows the death of St. Stephen by stoning (Acts 7, 58–60). The preserved parts of these scenes indicate that the painter interpreted the text quite literally, as was also the case with other cycles of St. Stephen and, at times, those of the Acts of the Apostles. The west wall of this parekklesion in Žiča, or rather the spot in which frescoes are no longer present, may have housed the scene of Burial of St. Stephen. The only elements which remain of the following composition – apparently the Invention of the Relics – include a part of a sarcophagus with the saint's halo and, beside it, a figure of a man discovering the relics. In the Nagoričino Menologion, the Invention of the Relics was rendered in a different manner. Of the two inventions of St. Stephen's relics, that on September 15th and that on August 2nd, the fresco painted in Žiča probably shows the latter, which took place in Jerusalem, because the scene which follows, taking up the entire south wall, is that of the Translation of Relics of St. Stephen. Although this composition is based on the Service of the Translation of Relics of St. Stephen and the Constantinopolitan synaxarion, the painters did not follow the text literally but rather rendered this event as a solemn ceremony. The right-hand part of the painting is taken up by the bishops, the priests and the deacons carry a carved reliquary containing the relics of St. Stephen on their shoulders, decorated with a half-figure of the saint in a medallion, while a group of men and women kneels and addresses the saint in prayer. On the other side of the composition, numerous ecclesiastics lead by the emperor and the patriarch, shown holding up a large cross, welcome the relics in front of the gates of Constantinople while deacons hold